

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of  
Numbering Resource Optimization

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**CC Docket No. 99-200**

**PETITION BY THE NORTH DAKOTA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
FOR ADDITIONAL DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT NUMBER  
OPTIMIZATION MEASURES IN THE 701 AREA CODE AND COMMENTS IN  
SUPPORT OF THE PETITION BY THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC  
UTILITIES COMMISSION AND MAINE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
FOR ADDITIONAL DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT NUMBER  
OPTIMIZATION MEASURES**

On April 26, 2019, the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission ("NHPUC" of "New Hampshire") filed a request with the Federal Communications Commission ("Commission" or "FCC") for additional delegated authority to implement individual telephone number ("ITN") pooling on a trial basis to conserve the 603 area code. This request was joined by the Maine Public Utilities Commission ("MPUC" or "Maine") in its June 26, 2019 petition requesting that the FCC grant Maine immediate relief to implement ITN pooling for Maine's 207 area code.

There was no resulting action taken by the FCC on the NHPUC and the MPUC filings until further requests for consideration were filed earlier in 2021.<sup>1</sup> On August 18, the Wireline Competition Bureau sought comments on NHPUC and MPUC's filings. As a result, the North Dakota Public Service Commission ("NDPSC" or "North Dakota") is providing comments in

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<sup>1</sup> Petition by the Maine Public Utilities Commission to Direct the North American Numbering Plan Administrator to Report on the Technical, Operational, and Cost Requirements to Implement Number Optimization Measures in the 207 Area Code, *In the Matter of Numbering Resource Optimization*, CC Docket No. 99-200 (July 15, 2021); and Comments of New Hampshire Department of Energy in Support of Petition by the Maine Public Utilities Commission to Direct the North American Numbering Plan Administrator to Report on the Technical, Operational, and Cost Requirements to Implement Number Optimization Measures in the 207 Area Code, *In the Matter of Numbering Resource Optimization*, CC Docket No. 99-200 (August 9, 2021).

support of NHPUC's and MPUC's efforts to implement telephone number conservation measures and requests the FCC grant the same relief to implement ITN pooling for North Dakota's 701 area code.

Many of the arguments and circumstances provided by New Hampshire's and Maine's filings also apply to North Dakota. North Dakota worked with a coalition of small and large states to help initiate 1,000-block pooling to conserve numbers, and this system has extended the life of North Dakota's single area code: 701. North Dakota now finds itself in a situation where there are many underutilized 1,000-blocks in circulation, and a fast-approaching exhaust date for 701<sup>2</sup>.

With many new voice service providers entering North Dakota for the first time, and others expanding their footprint, North Dakota finds itself in the position where voice service providers are requesting 1,000-blocks in rate centers where the amount of assigned individual telephone numbers is quite low, but the amount of assigned 1,000-blocks is relatively quite high<sup>3</sup>.

To illustrate North Dakota's challenge and the inefficiency of today's 1,000-block system, the NDPSC would like to direct the Commission to some remarkable figures provided by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator's ("NANPA") August 2021 Numbering Resource Utilization/Forecast Report ("NRUF"). According to the Number Planning Area ("NPA") Utilization by Rate Center Summary Report, North Dakota has 297 Rate Centers and of those, 261 rate centers are utilizing less than 20 percent of the blocks/codes issued to them, and 214 of 297 rate centers are utilizing five percent or less of the blocks/codes issued to them.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Beach rate center has three NXX Codes representing 30,000 possible numbers but has only seven percent utilization. In fact, there are 10 1,000-blocks currently available in this rate center. According to the latest US Census information, the town of Beach has a population of 1,024 people.

<sup>3</sup> In April of this year the Belfield rate center received its third new NXX Code in the past 8 years due to the lack of available blocks even though there were 37,970 unused numbers prior to the new code creation. Thus, despite the low usage of existing blocks, a town of 955 people claimed its fifth NXX Code.

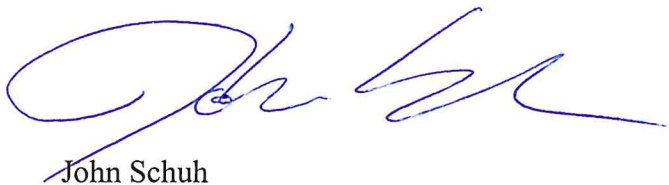
North Dakota's 701 area code is moving closer to exhaust. According to the April 2021 NRUF and NPA Exhaust Analysis, North Dakota's area code exhaust date has moved from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2028 to 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2026 over the past year. While the NDPSC is vigilant in trying to reduce the release of unnecessary NXX codes into circulation, it has been a challenging task. For example, the demand for numbers in the Bismarck, North Dakota rate center has been so high that it has required ten new NXX codes within the past five years. A review of the April 2021 NANPA Central Office Code Assignment Activity Records suggests that North Dakota has only 63 NXX codes or 630,000 new numbers available to it before exhaust.

To conserve numbers, the NDPSC has worked with providers over the past several years to find alternatives to the NXX codes being opened. This effort involved communication with existing NXX code and numbering block holders to ascertain if they have underutilized number blocks available for transfer. Furthermore, from August 2020 through February 2021, the NDPSC worked with NANPA, the FCC, and several service providers in North Dakota to reassign customers utilizing numbers in the 701-988 code to implement the new 988 three-digit code while retaining seven-digit dialing in North Dakota. While these efforts have been successful in preserving seven-digit dialing and slowing our utilization of new NXX codes, it is simply not enough.

Along with NHPUC and MPUC, the NDPSC believes that the trial could help generate interest in a broader implementation that would benefit the NANP as a whole; the inefficient use of block numbers is not just a problem in North Dakota, Maine and New Hampshire, but also in states with multiple area codes. While the potential exhaust of the larger North American Numbering Plan system may not be in sight for another two decades, the implementation of ITN pooling as the NHPUC outlines would undoubtedly push out that exhaust date out by many years.

In conclusion, North Dakota's 701 area code is a strong part of our state's identity. Extending the life of 701 would be beneficial to North Dakota citizens, and the current 1,000-block regime is not an efficient use of numbering resources as demonstrated by the millions of numbers in the 701 area code currently un-utilized, but ineligible for release back into the numbering pool. Accordingly, the NDPSC respectfully requests that the Commission grant the petitions filed by MPUC and NHPUC for additional delegated authority to implement ITN pooling on a trial basis and include North Dakota as part of the trial.

Respectfully submitted,



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